

Yolanda Kondonassis Performs Jennifer Higdon's Harp Concerto



**With the Baton Rouge Symphony Orchestra
Led by Music Director Timothy Muffitt**

**Thursday, September 13, 2018 at 7:30pm
First Baptist Church
529 Convention Street | Baton Rouge, LA**

**BRSO subscription tickets are available online at www.brso.org
Individual tickets on sale August 20**

“Yolanda Kondonassis’ performance abounds with affectionate detail . . . she plays with a keen sense of dramatic timing and a range of colour that’s breathtaking.” – *Gramophone*

Baton Rouge, LA – On **Thursday, September 13 at 7:30pm**, internationally acclaimed harpist **Yolanda Kondonassis** performs Pulitzer Prize-winner **Jennifer Higdon’s Harp Concerto** with the **Baton Rouge Symphony Orchestra** under the direction of Timothy Muffitt at **First Baptist Church** (529 Convention Street). This new harp concerto by Jennifer Higdon is co-commissioned by the BRSO and opens the 2018-2019 season on a program entitled *American Greats*, along with Dvořák’s Symphony No. 9 “From the New World” and excerpts from Copland’s *Billy the Kid*.

Higdon, one of the greatest musical voices of our time, wrote and dedicated her Harp Concerto to Kondonassis. Higdon says, “I love writing concerti because it gives me a chance to not only explore the different instruments’ qualities, but also because I get to experience the joy of the performer in displaying those qualities. Yolanda Kondonassis’ enthusiasm for her instrument is infectious.” Kondonassis echoes, “I have been looking forward to bringing a harp concerto by Jennifer Higdon to life for close to ten years. Her originality and ability to resonate with listeners on so many levels made her the perfect choice for this much-needed addition to the harp repertoire.”

Of the world premiere performance in May 2018, *Rochester City Paper* notes, “Higdon was keen to showcase the harp’s naturally rich harmonic colors, and there was something prayerful about Kondonassis’ playing, particularly in the quieter moments,” and “Sonically, the presence of Kondonassis’ harp seemed to signify magic at work, in the throes of a hectic and sobering reality, as played by the orchestra . . . The vibraphone and bells reinforced the divine character of Kondonassis’ tone, and something akin to Renaissance song in Higdon’s melodies only heightened the mystery.” In the final movement, the critic observes, “The previously conventional concerto acquired a welcome avant-garde, dance-like quality.”

Jennifer Higdon’s Harp Concerto is a consortium commission from the Baton Rouge Symphony Orchestra, Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra, Harrisburg Symphony Orchestra, Fargo-Moorhead Symphony Orchestra, Lansing Symphony Orchestra, and the Oklahoma City Philharmonic Orchestra, with performances scheduled throughout the 2018- 2019 season. Following the May 2018 world premiere, the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra presents Kondonassis in encore performances of the Harp Concerto on September 20 and 22, 2018 to be recorded for AZICA Records.

Kondonassis shares one of her missions with the project by saying, “We tried to aim for a wide geographical swath of America for the premiere series of concerts - the midwest, the south, the north, the southeast, and the northeast - and target areas where music is important, but not taken for granted. It is such an honor to be the first to perform what I

know will become an iconic concerto for my instrument, and to bring it to a premiere series of audiences who will truly share in the thrill.”

Yolanda Kondonassis is celebrated as one of the world’s premier solo harpists and is widely regarded as today’s most recorded classical harpist. With “a range of colour that’s breathtaking” (*Gramophone*), she has been hailed as “a brilliant and expressive player” (*Dallas Morning News*), with “a dazzling technique unfailingly governed by impeccable musical judgment” (*Detroit News*). She has appeared around the globe as a concerto soloist and in recital, bringing her unique brand of musicianship and warm artistry to an ever-increasing audience. Also a published author, speaker, professor of harp, and environmental activist, her many passions are woven into a vibrant and multi-faceted career.

With hundreds of thousands of discs and downloads sold worldwide, Kondonassis’ extensive discography includes twenty titles and her 2008 release, *Air* (Telarc), was nominated for a Grammy Award. Her latest album, *Ginastera: One Hundred*, celebrates Ginastera's 2016 centennial and was released in October 2016 on Oberlin Music. Her many albums have earned universal critical praise as she continues to be a pioneering force in the harp world, striving to push the boundaries of what listeners expect of the harp.

The recipient of two Solo Recitalists Grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and a 2011 recipient of the Cleveland Arts Prize, Kondonassis has been featured on CNN and PBS as well as Sirius/XM Radio’s *Symphony Hall*, NPR’s *All Things Considered* and *Tiny Desk Concerts*, *St. Paul Sunday Morning*, and *Performance Today*. In addition to her active solo, chamber music and recording schedule, Kondonassis heads the harp departments at Oberlin Conservatory of Music and The Cleveland Institute of Music, and presents masterclasses around the world. For more information, visit www.YolandaHarp.com.

Jennifer Higdon, Jennifer Higdon, Pulitzer Prize and two-time Grammy winner, is one of the most performed living American composers working today. She is a major figure in contemporary Classical music, receiving the 2010 Pulitzer Prize in Music for her Violin Concerto, a 2010 Grammy for her Percussion Concerto and a 2018 Grammy for her Viola Concerto. Most recently, Higdon received the prestigious Nemmers Prize from Northwestern University which is given to contemporary classical composers of exceptional achievement who have significantly influenced the field of composition. She has also been the recipient of a Guggenheim, Koussevitzky, and Pew Fellowships, as well as two awards from the American Academy of Arts & Letters. Higdon enjoys several hundred performances a year of her works, and *blue cathedral* is one of today’s most performed contemporary orchestral works, with more than 600 performances worldwide. Her works have been recorded on more than sixty CDs. Higdon’s first opera, *Cold Mountain*, won the prestigious International Opera Award for Best World Premiere and the opera recording was nominated for 2 Grammy awards. Dr. Higdon holds the Rock Chair in Composition at The Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia. Her music is published exclusively by Lawdon Press. For more information, visit www.jenniferhigdon.com.

The **Baton Rouge Symphony Orchestra**, founded in 1947, is the oldest professional orchestra in Louisiana. In the 2018-19 season, the BRSO is bringing music to new venues across the Baton Rouge community, with a focus on partnerships and a spotlight on our guest artists. The mission of the Baton Rouge Symphony Orchestra is to enhance the quality of life in our community through music. We achieve this by performing quality orchestral and chamber concerts, providing music-related educational programs and services, and actively supporting the programs of volunteer performing and service organizations who share our mission.

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